

Sustainable Economic Development Advisory Committee (SEDAC)

Minutes

March 8, 2007, 8:30 AM

Office of Economic Development

Members present: Becky Anderson, Jacqueline Grant, David McConville, Brian Moore, Chuck Tessier, Matthew Raker, Patti Glazer, Gene Bell, Robin Cape, Bruce Tompkins

Members absent: Ray Bailey, Carol King, Kimberly Hodges, Lewis Lankford, Frank Taylor, Pam Turner, Pat Whalen

Staff: Sam Powers, Brenda Mills, Stephanie Monson, Jan Moore, Gary Jackson

Guests: Greg Walker-Wilson, Connie Mitchell, Edna Campos, Louise Anderson

Quorum: A quorum was present.

Minutes

Vice-Chair Moore moved for approval of the January 11 and February 8, 2007 meeting minutes. Mr. Bell seconded and it carried unanimously.

Minority Business Program Annual Report

Brenda Mills, Minority Business Program Coordinator for the City of Asheville, presented the 2006 Minority Business Program Annual Report. She reviewed a summary of primary points from the Annual Report. Ms. Mills said the four cornerstones of the Program are: mentoring, technical assistance, education and networking. Ms. Mills will forward a copy of the Annual Report and SEDAC's recommendations to City Council.

During SEDAC discussion of the report members suggested that it might be useful for the Minority Business Program to develop benchmarks.

Vice-Chair Moore asked Ms. Mills if there were any barriers she felt she faced in implementing the program. Ms. Mills indicated that previously the Joint program had more administrative support and that the elimination of support staff created challenges. She said less support staff has not allowed her to be as visible or to visit as many job sites and discuss issues, as well as do more networking.

There was discussion about educating youth in high schools about entrepreneurship. Mr. Bell felt it would be a good idea for a SEDAC representative to talk to the School Board about educating youth regarding the options available to them.

Mr. Jackson suggested integrating the Minority Business Program into SEDAC's priorities list. This would mainstream the program.

HUB Project Updates

Mr. McConville is involved in the digital media portion of the HUB Project, with a focus toward working with GIS and incorporating all of the data and making projections.

Mr. Raker is working on the content of the HUB website. Councilwoman Cape felt there is a lot of work to be done in defining and helping people understand the process. It was agreed the website would help with this.

Ms. Anderson said Handmade is working on a new pattern book, which addresses the design of houses and their construction.

Update of SEDAC Priorities/Asheville Agenda

Chairman Tessier said that a large amount of SEDAC's short list of priorities mesh with City Council's strategic goals. He felt SEDAC's first step should be to finalize the areas of focus and who is going to work on them. He felt they need a list of specific things that are happening right now and their timeframe.

Councilwoman Cape felt there needs to be an action plan to move some of the goals forward. She said there has been plenty of talk about what needs to be done and felt it is time to organize to do it. She said it needs to be decided who will be in the group and who will be the organizing agency for the riverway priority. She said Land-of-Sky (LOS) has expressed an interest in being the organizing group. She felt LOS would be good because of the river and brownfields work they have already done and because they are a neutral agency.

Mr. Powers said there's a need for network based economic development. He pointed out that 3-4 months ago, City Council had asked SEDAC to make a recommendation on incentive policies. Mr. Jackson agreed that incentives should be a SEDAC priority.

Mr. Jackson told SEDAC they don't have to have all of the problems solved, just a realistic plan for what they plan to get done. He said SEDAC will report to City Council in June focusing on their accomplishments and goals. A written annual report was submitted to Council earlier in the year.

Mr. McConville felt it's a commitment issue; who is committed and what is their commitment to the process. He asked if Councilwoman Cape's recommendation was for LOS to do it.

Councilwoman Cape said SEDAC needs to determine if they want to let Land-of-Sky be the organizing group or whether it should be assigned in-house.

Regarding in-house assignment, Mr. Jackson equated it to the HUB project. He said there are so many different directions it can take, there is unfinished business, there's a shift in roles. Staff can do anything, but staff can not do everything. Staff is spread very thin as it is.

Mr. Powers noted that staff receives their direction from the City Manager who is charged with the implementation of City Council policy. Once the City Manager receives policy direction from Council, staff can be dedicated to work on a specific issue.

Councilwoman Cape said SEDAC still needs to gain better focus as a group.

Mr. McConville suggested that if incentives is the priority, then it needs to be determined what improvements with incentives are recommended and finish that issue.

Ms. Grant said it would be helpful for her to have a list of what groups and committees are out there and what they are working on.

Mr. Bell felt that summer jobs is another issue that needs to be addressed before summer gets here.

Councilwoman Cape said City Council receives requests for funding from numerous groups. She said SEDAC needs to let Council know their priorities in order to help Council determine where to distribute funding. She informed SEDAC that any requests to Council need to be included on Council's agenda.

Mr. Powers added that any recommendation with budget implications would need to be made now because budgeting for the coming year is being worked on right now.

Ms. Glazer asked if SEDAC could recommend that one staff person be assigned as a Project Manager to work only on a specific issue, i.e. the river since it seems to be the topic that keeps coming up.

Councilwoman Cape said it needs to be determined:

1. whether we want an internal person or someone from LOS
2. what are the incentive tools

Mr. McConville suggested that SEDAC meetings be reorganized so that at the beginning of the meeting SEDAC can receive reports from staff on issues, and more specifically, what their top goals are and what they need in order to make the goal happen.

Chairman Tessier said that he would take SEDAC's list, prioritize it, and write down specific action items to address each issue.

Adjourned: 10:35 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 12, 2007 - 8:30 AM
Economic Development Office, 29 Haywood Street

Minutes prepared by: Jan Moore